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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KPKO](#) [ASEC](#) [IV](#)
SUBJECT: COTE D'IVOIRE: PEACE TRAIN SLOWS TO A CRAWL

REF: A. ABIDJAN 903

- [1](#)B. ABIDJAN 839
- [1](#)C. ABIDJAN 854
- [1](#)D. ABIDJAN 804
- [1](#)E. ABIDJAN 922

ABIDJAN 00000926 001.2 OF 004

Classified By: POL/ECON Jim Wojtasiewicz, reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

Summary

[1](#)1. (C) The Cote d'Ivoire peace train has slowed to a barely perceptible crawl. Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR), dismantling of militias, and identification of Ivoirian nationals are supposed to be proceeding concomitantly but instead they are bogging down concomitantly. DDR is on hold after the rebel New Forces (FN) suspended their participation, and what progress had been made on this seems to be slipping away. The dismantlement of militias is also on hold, because of the low numbers of weapons turned in. The FN suspended participation in DDR after President Gbagbo forced Prime Minister Banny to change the procedures for registering undocumented Ivoirians and foreigners, which is a crucial step toward preparing for elections. Both the FN and the political opposition rejected the new procedures, and the political opposition has given Banny eight days to rescind them. Even assuming the new procedures are eventually accepted, in the worst case they could send the identification process back to square one, and even in the best case they will significantly lengthen the time needed to do it. After that there are more controversies and disputes ahead over how to actually issue identification cards to Ivoirians and eventually register them to vote.

[1](#)2. (C) With key elements of the peace process stalled and October around the corner, attention is turning to what will happen after President Gbagbo's one-year extension in office ends. As happened a year ago, Gbagbo insists he has the constitutional power to extend his own term as many times as he wants; the opposition insists he does not and must go. We anticipate that the international community's decision-making process will follow the same lines as last year: the African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) will agree on a way forward and the Security Council will endorse it. We anticipate that African leaders will not have much appetite for the international community to intervene in Cote d'Ivoire now any more directly than it has already, and thus we will likely see a one-year rollover of the current arrangements. Some progress has been made over

the last year, but looking back at how little has been achieved and looking ahead at how many obstacles still need to be overcome, the Independent Electoral Commission (CEI) will have difficulty organizing elections even by October 2007. End summary.

Peace Train Crawling

13. (C) The Cote d'Ivoire peace train has slowed to a barely perceptible crawl, with DDR, dismantling of militias, and identification/voter registration, all stalled.

Disarmament

14. (C) The decision by the FN to suspend, for the moment, their participation in military-military talks between the chiefs of staff of the FANCI (the Armed Forces of Cote d'Ivoire) and the FAFN (Armed Forces of the New Forces) brought the DDR process to a standstill (ref A).

15. (C) In any case even before Soro suspended FN participation, little real progress had been made on DDR. Both FANCI and FN had claimed to have completed the pre-regroupment phase of disarmament, where ex-combatants are assembled at designated sites but remain under their own command structure. However, for the FANCI this had little practical effect, since in most cases it only meant that the units to be eventually disarmed remained in their barracks. For the FAFN, pre-regroupment did mean moving forces to other sites, but most of the pre-regroupment sites in the north were not habitable. Embassy officers have visited several of these sites since pre-regroupment was declared to be completed and they were nearly empty of FAFN soldiers. Two important steps were supposed to be taken at the August 8

ABIDJAN 00000926 002.2 OF 004

meeting, that the FAFN boycotted, of the quadripartite monitoring group composed of the FANCI, FAFN, the UN Operation in Cote d'Ivoire (ONUCI) and the French Licorne peacekeeping force. One was that the FAFN were to finally hand over a list of their combatants, so that the international peacekeepers could verify that they were all in pre-regroupment sites. The other was that discussions were to begin about moving to the regroupment phase, where the combatants come under the control of international peacekeepers. The meeting never took place and those two next steps are now on hold, even as what progress had been made on pre-regroupment slips away.

Militias

16. (C) The dismantlement of pro-Gbagbo militias in the West, announced with great fanfare July 26 (ref B), has also ground to a halt. Jean-Luc Stallone, head of ONUCI's DDR department, told a meeting of local representatives of members of the International Working Group August 14 that the UN had advised the National Program for DDR (PNDDR) to suspend the program indefinitely because of the low ratio of the number of weapons turned over to the number of combatants signing up to be paid for dismantling. FN leader Soro took note of this low ratio of weapons turnover in his August 8 statement, calling the program a masquerade and noting that at the same time dismantlement was supposed to be taking place, armed militias attacked the maritime police (ref C). Soro cited this incident, and the deaths of civilians at the hands of militias demonstrating against the mobile courts (audiences foraines -- AF) seeking to register undocumented Ivoirians and foreigners (ref D), as evidence of the "passivity" of the defense and security forces in protecting the population, and he called for increased priority to be

given in the DDR process to the restructuring of the armed forces and the creation of an integrated FANCI/FAFN joint staff. Former FAFN Western Zone Commander Losseny Fofana (who is one of the four Ivoirians currently subject to UN sanctions) said in a newspaper interview August 11 that the FAFN are now conditioning their own disarmament on the finding of Western militia weapons.

Identification/Voter Registration

17. C) The issue that FN leader Guillaume Soro cited as the reason for suspending participation in DDR was President Gbagbo's declaration that the AF's can only issue birth registrations, not a second form of documentation that provisionally establishes Ivoirian nationality for those entitled to it. Gbagbo and his FPI party are also claiming that some of the magistrates conducting the AF's were not legally appointed. Those actions have plunged the whole identification process into uncertainty (ref D). In the worst case, all the nationality certificates and even some of the birth registrations already issued could be invalidated, sending the process essentially back to square one. In the best case, another cumbersome step has been added to the sequence of actions needed to document Ivoirians and register them to vote. The UN was estimating that it would take ten months for the AF's to finish issuing birth registrations and certificates of nationality to all undocumented Ivoirians, and even that seemed optimistic. With the delays that have now occurred, and the apparent need for Ivoirians to go back to a second court for their nationality certificate after they receive their birth registration, this process will surely take much longer than that.

18. (C) Then, after all Ivoirians have certificates of nationality, they will need to receive actual national identification cards. There is still no agreement, or even any real discussion, about what procedure to use to issue identification cards. The procedure for issuing identification cards has been a very contentious issue since the late 1990's -- it was one of the things that led to the 2002 coup attempt/rebellion. At that time President Gbagbo and the FPI had instituted a controversial new procedure that did not recognize the certificate of nationality. It was agreed under Linas-Marcoussis in 2003 to go back to a procedure based on the certificate of nationality. However, it appears that under the law enacted by the FPI-controlled National Assembly in 2004 supposedly to implement the new procedure, every single Ivoirian will have to get a new identification card. The issue of how to implement a new procedure under that law has not even been addressed. Additionally, whatever the new procedure, after all of the

ABIDJAN 00000926 003.2 OF 004

recent controversy it appears likely that the FPI will challenge many of the newly issued certificates of nationality. All of this indicates that the identification card step in the process will be contentious and time-consuming.

19. (C) Finally, Ivoirians with identification cards will have to be registered to vote. Currently there are two controversies over the voter registration process. One is whether to start with the 2000 voter list and update it, as President Gbagbo and the FPI want, or to compile an entirely new list, as the opposition insists. Indeed, Gbagbo even said in his August 6 National Day address that it would be illegal to compile a new list. However, the RHDP (Rally of Houphouetists for Democracy and Peace), the grouping of the four main political opposition parties, said in its August 14 declaration that the opposition has always challenged the authenticity of the 2000 list because it was compiled by the INS (National Institute of Statistics), which is controlled by Gbagbo cronies. Scott Smith, Special Assistant to the UN High Representative for Elections (HRE), told us August 17

that in theory it does not matter whether the old list is used as a starting point. Once the identification database has been built, it can simply be cross-checked against the 2000 voter list, to create an accurate updated list of Ivoirians eligible to register to vote.

¶10. (C) However, this leads to a second controversy over voter registration -- the role of the INS in the process. Smith told us that Prime Minister Banny is planning to hire an "operator" to build one data base to be used both for issuing identification cards and creating, one way or the other, a list of eligible voters. However, this leaves unclear the role of the INS, which was in charge of preparing the voter registration list in the past. The opposition has long charged that the INS is politically compromised and should not be in charge of preparing this list. They thought they had won agreement in the Pretoria II Agreement that the politically balanced Independent Electoral Commission (CEI) would control this process. However, the Gbagbo camp has continued to assert that the wording of Pretoria II actually leaves the INS completely in charge, required only to keep the CEI informed of its actions. This dispute was submitted to South African President Mbeki for mediation, and last month he issued a ruling siding with the FPI interpretation. Smith told us this significantly complicates the mechanics of voter registration. Prime Minister Banny was planning to allow Ivoirians to register to vote at the same time they receive their identification cards, based on the same data base of Ivoirian nationals as noted above. However, the INS appears intent on carrying out its own process of preparing a voter list, based solely on the 2000 list and independently from the identification process. This would not only add time to the whole identification/registration process, but it would diminish the credibility of the voter list and potentially its accuracy as well. Smith told us that Prime Minister Banny is exploring with the FPI ways to keep the INS "responsible" for the list while it is actually compiled from the operator's database.

Looking Ahead

¶11. (C) With so many elements of the peace process stalled and October just around the corner, increased attention is being given to whether President Gbagbo will remain in office after that. Gbagbo stated flatly in his August 8 National Day address that he intends to use his emergency powers under the Constitution to extend his term in office as many times as necessary. However, Soro in his August 8 communique and the RHDP in their August 14 declaration adamantly rejected any extension of Gbagbo's term. Less attention is being given to Prime Minister Banny, whose post-October fate is also presumably uncertain at least in theory. However, the RHDP's ultimatum to Banny to rescind the new AF procedures within 8 days or else could well have been intended to lay down a marker that he cannot count on their support after October.

¶12. (C) Eyes are also turning toward New York, where Secretary General Annan said there would be a meeting on Cote

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d'Ivoire on the margins of the National Assembly in September. Mariama Gamatie-Bayard, Director of ONUCI's Political Department, told us August 15 that there is still no agreement on the date or the format for the meeting, and that President Gbagbo is balking at attending. She said his office told ONUCI that Gbagbo will neither agree to be summoned to New York for another "mini-summit" of Ivoirian

ABIDJAN 00000926 004.2 OF 004

political leaders with Annan and African regional leaders, nor will he participate in a gathering of the international community to dictate his fate after October.

Comment

¶13. (C) DDR, dismantling of the militia, and identification are supposed to be proceeding concomitantly but instead they are bogging down concomitantly. All sides seem to have abandoned any pretense that there will be elections in October, or any time soon thereafter, and are now laying down markers for the post-October scenario. What we have seen so far is pretty much a repeat of 12 months ago, with Gbagbo declaring that he has the power under the Constitution to extend his own term, and the opposition insisting that he has no such power and must not remain. It is the opposition that is appealing more openly to the international community, but we suspect that Gbagbo and his followers are also quite concerned about what the international community might do, or at least try to do, to limit his room for maneuver after October.

¶14. (C) Last year the international community's decision-making process on what should happen after October also started in New York, in September, on the margins of the General Assembly, but it was with a meeting of the AU's Peace and Security Council. They asked ECOWAS to come up with a way forward, which ECOWAS adopted in Abuja, the AU accepted in Addis Ababa, and the Security Council endorsed via UNSCR 1633 on October 21. Whatever happens with Secretary General Annan's proposed New York meeting, we would anticipate a similar scenario this year. As for the outcome, African ambassadors in Abidjan tell us that the AU does not have much appetite for the international community to intervene in Cote d'Ivoire any more directly now than it has already, and we will probably see a one-year rollover of the current arrangements.

¶15. (C) Mess might be a better word than arrangements. There has been some progress over the last year. Procedures are in place for identification, albeit contested and very slow moving ones. A start was made on DDR and dismantlement of the militias, though both are now on hold. However, looking back at how little has been achieved, and looking ahead at how many obstacles still need to be overcome, the Independent Electoral Commission will have difficulty organizing elections even by October 2007. end Comment.

Hooks